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Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TEHRAN 06776 051313Z

42
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 OMB-01 EB-07 COME-00 TRSE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SCCT-01 /078 W
---------- 016597
R 051105Z JUL 76
FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7924
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

S E C R E T TEHRAN 6776

EO 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, PFOR, IR
SUB: IRAN'S MODERNIZING MONARCHY: A POLITICAL ASSESSMENT

1. BELOW IS SUMMARY OF TEHRAN'S A-123 BEING POUCHED TO YOUR POST AND WIDER LIST OF ADDRESSEES.

2. IRAN'S RAPID ECONOMIC EXPANSION HAS NOT PRODUCED A CONCOMITANT GROWTH IN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION. MANY GROUPS, WHILE MAINTAINING ENOUGH TIES WITH POLITICIANS TO PROTECT THEIR INTERESTS, HAVE HELD BACK FROM DEEPER POLITICAL ACTIVITY BECAUSE OF UNCERTAINTY OR CYNICISM ABOUT THE CURRENT POLITICAL SYSTEM. THE SHAH COMPLETELY DOMINATES PRESENT IRANIAN POLITICS, BUT EXISTENT AND EMERGING GROUPS WILL HAVE TO BE SUCCESSFULLY ENGAGED IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS IF IRAN IS TO CONTINUE DEVELOPING IN RELATIVE STABILITY. THE COMPOSITION OF IRAN'S ELITE IS CHANGING, AND MANY GROUPS WHICH BASICALLY SUPPORT THE REGIME--BUSINESSMEN, MILITARY OFFICERS, MIDDLE CLASS OFFICIALS, AND MANY INTELLECTUALS--MIGHT
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PAGE 02 TEHRAN 06776 051313Z

FIND THEIR LOYALTIES SERIOUSLY CHALLENGED, PARTICULARLY IN A

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Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006

SUCCESSION CRISIS WHICH DILUTED ELITE UNITY BETWEEN TWO OR MORE POWER CONTENDERS.

3. THERE IS NO STRONG OVERT OPPOSITION TO THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT. RELIGIOUS CONSERVATIVES ARE DISSATISFIED WITH MANY ASPECTS OF MODERNIZATION, YET REMAIN ONLY POTENTIALLY TROUBLESOME. TERRORISTS GET PUBLICITY AND ARE A SERIOUS IRRITANT, BUT HAVE ONLY MARGINAL IMPACT ON IRAN'S POLITICAL DYNAMICS. MOREOVER, THE GOI HAS RECENTLY BEEN HUNTING THEM DOWN WITH MORE SUCCESS. SOME STUDENTS AND INTELLECTUALS, PARTICULARLY THOSE ABROAD, OPPOSE THE REGIME, BUT THEY ARE NOT ORGANIZED TO GAIN INTERNAL PUBLIC SUPPORT. AS LONG AS ECONOMIC CONDITIONS REMAIN RELATIVELY GOOD AND THE SHAH OR A LEGITIMATE SUCCESSOR REMAIN IN POWER, THESE DISSIDENTS ARE UNLIKELY TO SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECT IRANIAN POLITICAL EVOLUTION.

4. PERSIAN POLITICS STILL DEPENDS OVERWHELMINGLY ON PERSONALITIES AND ON THE INFLUENCE OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS. DESPITE RECENT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE INSTITUTIONALIZATION. THE MAJLES' POWER HAS DECLINED, AND THE NEW RESURGENCE PARTY IS NOT YET ORGANIZATIONALLY CAPABLE OF PLAYING AN INFLUENTIAL ROLE ALTHOUGH ITS LEADERS, OPERATING THROUGH THE POLITICAL BUREAU, ARE HAVING SOME IMPACT. TECHNOLOGICAL IMPERATIVES OF MODERN SOCIETY CONFLICT WITH TRADITIONAL IRANIAN PATTERNS OF PATERNALISTIC AUTHORITARIAN LEADERSHIP. THE SHAH, THE GOVERNMENT, AND THE PARTY SAY THEY WANT TO CHANGE TRADITIONAL VALUES BY DECENTRALIZING BOTH GOVERNMENT AND PARTY ADMINISTRATION, BUT IMPLEMENTATION IS GLACIAL. THE SUCCESS OF THIS PROCESS WILL BE ONE MEASURE OF THE IRANIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM'S ABILITY TO ADJUST TO MANAGING A MODERNIZING SOCIETY.

5. EXTERNALLY, IRAN HAS BEGUN TO TRY AND AFFECT ITS EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT AFTER DECADES OF BEING ACTED UPON. THE SOVIET UNION REMAINS PUBLIC ENEMY NO. 1, AND THE U.S. IS IRAN'S PRIMARY BIG POWER SUPPORTER. HOWEVER, RESURGENT IRANIAN NATIONALISM HAS MADE THE GOI MORE CRITICAL OF ITS RELATIONSHIPS WITH FRIENDS, AND THE TEMPTATION TO BLAME EMERGENT ILLS OF INDUSTRIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ON FOREIGN INADEQUACIES IS GROWING. IRAN IS ATTEMPTING WITH SOME SUCCESS TO BETTER ITS RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS AND TO PLAY A LEADING ROLE IN PERSIAN GULF AFFAIRS.

6. EXCLUDING RADICAL ACCIDENTS SUCH AS THE SHAH'S SUDDEN DEPARTURE,
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IRAN WILL EXPERIENCE INCREASING DIFFICULTIES MANAGING ECONOMIC GROWTH COUPLED WITH GREATER POLITICAL PARTICIPATION BY DEVELOPING PARTY GROUPS WHICHARE LIKELY TO CRITICIZE THE GOI MORE. THIS WILL PROBABLY RESULT IN SOME LIMITS ON POLITICAL ACTIVITY COUNTERBALANCED BY MORE INTENSE CRITICISM OF FOREIGNERS. IRAN WILL MAKE THE ADJUSTMENTS IN ATTITUDES NECESSARY TO RUN ITS EMERGING SOCIETY, BUT THE PROCESS WILL NOT BE EASY. OBLIQUE ACCOMMODATION, NOT CONFRONTATION, WILL REMAIN THE QUINTESSENTIAL IRANIAN POLITICAL STYLE, AND

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OVER THE NEXT 5-10 YEARS THE SHAH WILL EITHER HIMSELF BEGIN TO SHARE POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY WITH OTHER, NEWER GROUPS OR BE FORCED TO, AS HIS INNER CIRCLE BEGINS TO RETIRE OR DIE. SHOULD A SUCCESSION CRISIS OCCUR WITHIN THE NEXT 6-7 YEARS, THE REGENCY COUNCIL WOULD PROBABLY HOLD THE COUNTRY AND THE MONARCHY TOGETHER INITIALLY, BUT POWER COULD QUICKLY COME UP FOR GRABS IF THE CENTRIFUGAL FORCES OF CHANGE DROVE VARIOUS GROUPS TO PUT THEIR OWN INTERESTS AHEAD OF UNITY AND STABILITY.

7. ASSUMING THE EXPECTED EVOLUTION, U.S. INTERESTS LIE IN MAINTAINING CLOSE RELATIONS WITH IRAN SUPPORTIVE OF MODERNIZING DEVELOPMENTS. THIS WILL REQUIRE SUBSTANTIAL DIPLOMATIC FINESSE, FOREBEARANCE IN THE FACE OF OCCASIONAL HOSTILITY, AND A WILLINGNESS TO SPEAK FRANKLY AND HONESTLY TO DEFUSE PROBLEMS BEFORE THEY THREATEN TO DISRUPT WHAT IS ESSENTIALLY BOTH AN INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL EVOLUTION GENERALLY FAVORABLE TO AMERICAN INTERESTS.
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